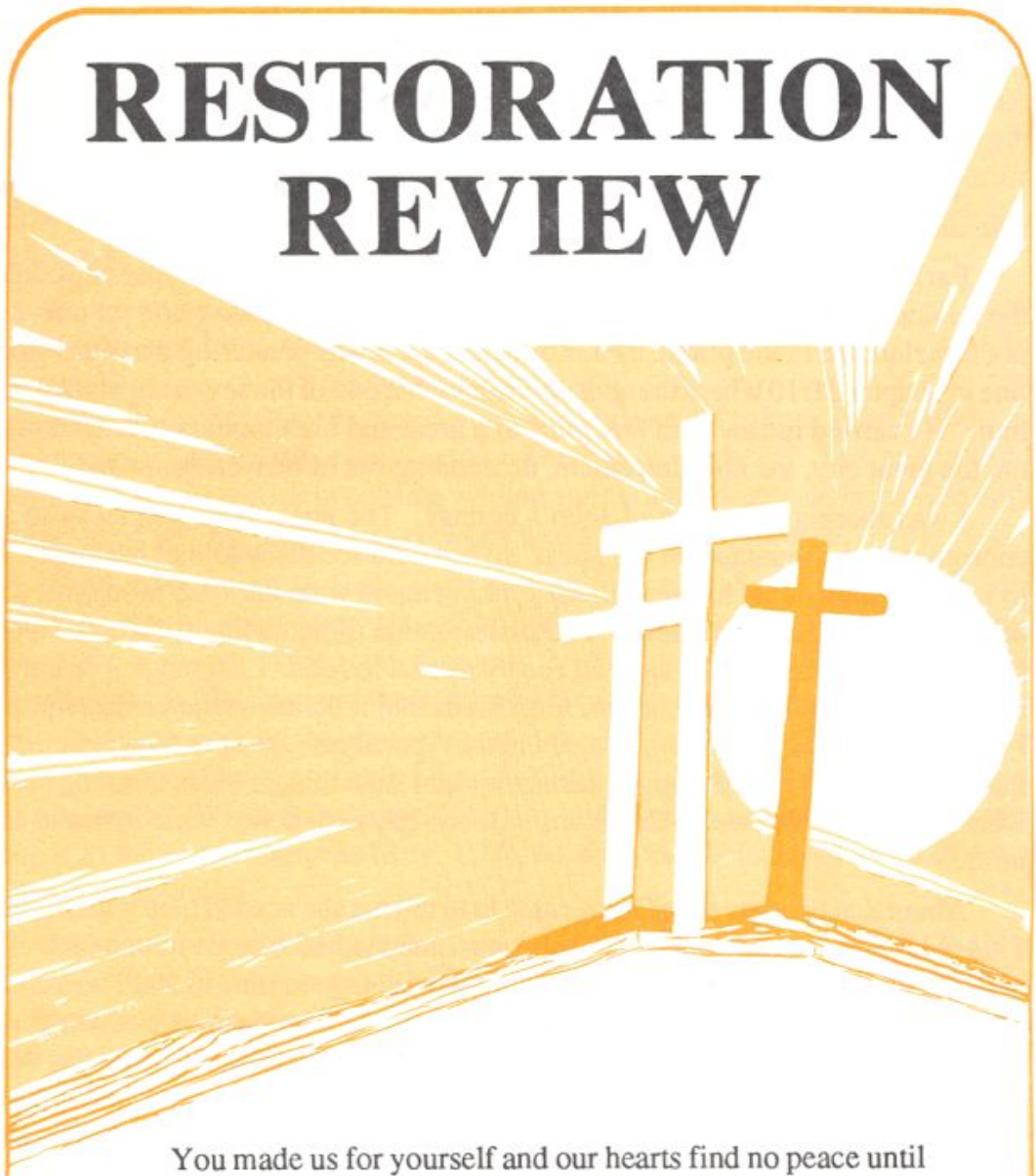
RESTORATION REVIEW



You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you. -- *Augustine*

In This Issue:

Augustine: "Love God and Do What You Please"

Do We Exalt the Church Above Christ?

Volume 32, No. 7 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **September, 1990**

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The Hope of the Believer … No. 17

WRITE IT DOWN!

Then! heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" —Rev. 14:13

Early this morning I was reading the last chapters of the Apocalypse of St. John the Divine, its ancient title. We call it Revelation, which is also a correct title, but not Revelations, in the plural, as it is often called. I was pondering that marvelous line in chapter 21:10 where the apostle relates what one of the seven angels showed him: "He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."

I was sharing a fraction of John's ecstasy. The angel bore him away to an enormous high mountain "in the Spirit" so he could see the whole of the great city as it came down out of heaven. I was thinking about what the story is supposed to mean to us, such as representing the transformation of humanity by an act of God, but I concluded that it must have all been very real to John. Laid out before him in the vision was the New Jerusalem, so glorious that it defied adequate description. I could understand why now and again in the Apocalypse the apostle is tempted to fall down and worship the angel that shows him such things. I was thinking about what a thrill it is that we as Christians will one day experience what John did and more.

About that time my dear Ouida came in to tell me she needed help with Mother Pitts, who is now bedfast. When I am gone someone has to come in to help Ouida with her mother. I told her that she disturbed me at a good time in that I was about to go into orbit and I needed something to bring me back to this mundane world. As we moved Mother Pitts' frail body from the bed to chair, where she now has to be syringe fed, I had the feeling that what we were experiencing is part of what the book of Revelation is about. It is about life and death. It is about hope in a troubled world. It is about a very old man, not long for this world, having visions and revelations.

I tell Ouida that caring for Mother Pitts in her last days is like sitting with her on the platform of a railway station waiting for the train to come to take her to another world. The wait seems endless. She grows weary waiting. Now and again it seems that we can faintly hear the train's whistle in the distance, but it seems never to arrive. It may be that when the train finally pulls into the station and Mother Pitts is ushered on, bound for glory, that we

will be tempted to go along with her. But it doesn't work that way. We have to wait our turn. What is important to remember is that when we leave this world we are not leaving home but going home.

While death itself is joyous for the believer, the ordeal of dying can be one of life's bitterest experiences. Even when there is no disease attacking the body, as is the case with Mother Pitts, old age gradually takes its toll. We sometimes keep on living long after life has lost all meaning. It is as if we were supposed to die but do not know how. After all, it is something we do only once. The Bible teaches that only God has the key to death. We can't just up and die when it suits us. When death is preceded by an ongoing, painful and debilitating illness, such as cancer or Alzheimer's, it is a tragedy that is almost unbearable for anyone, and for the Christian it is a problem of suffering that appears to have no answer.

But if waiting on the platform for the glory train to arrive is a good analogy, then Ouida came up with at least part of the answer. When I reminded her that some folk not only have to wait at the station for a long time, some have to wait in pain and agony, like those I visit at the nursing home. Ouida said, "But the Lord will see to it that none of us is called upon to suffer more than he can bear." Yes, and it could be added that he is with us in both the waiting and the suffering. And he can use both for our good and his glory — even when we can't understand how!

While rummaging in Revelation, always a source of ecstatic hope for the believer, I was impressed how now and again a particular assurance is underscored with *Write it down!* That is the case with the great promise in Rev. 14:13 where it not only says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on," but the voice from heaven tells the prophet to put it in writing. It is a way of emphasizing the importance of the message to be put in writing, as if heaven were saying, "This is a vital truth." While at the outset John was told to put in writing what he saw and send it to the seven churches (Rev. 1:11), he was nonetheless told again to write down certain things.

Paul does a similar thing in the pastoral letters. There are some five "faithful sayings" which he introduces with "Faithful is the saying," and sometimes he adds, "and worthy of all acceptation." This could appear odd to the reader, who might respond, "Isn't it all faithful and worthy of acceptation, so why single out certain points?" The answer is that while all truths of Scripture are equally true they are not all equally important. So a writer deems some points so crucial that he finds ways to underscore them. Therefore when Paul

wrote that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, among whom he was chief (1 Tim. 1:15), it was such a vital truth that he emphasized it as particularly faithful and worthy of acceptance.

Write it down! In all cultures and throughout all history things have been sealed, certified, and clarified by being put in writing. I recall sitting in a restaurant with business men on one occasion when verbal agreements were made. One of them took a paper napkin and wrote out the basics of the agreement, and they both initialed it. They had the agreement in writing even before legal documents were drawn up. Write it down! It is something we all understand. It is noteworthy that Scripture makes use of this very common human practice. God not only makes a promise, he puts it in writing!

We don't know whose voice it was there in Rev. 14 that the prophet heard. Perhaps an angel's or even the Lord's. That it came out of heaven is sufficient. John had already been writing down what he had seen; now he was to write down what he had heard. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.* It is such a precious truth let us put it in writing and send it abroad!

To die in the Lord means to die knowing him and loving him as Savior. It means to be close to him, trusting in him, even unto death itself, perhaps even martyrdom. What "from now on" means is uncertain, but it probably refers to the fact that the Christian is immediately blessed and at home with God from the moment he dies. Paul could write that he had the desire to depart and be with Christ (Philip. 1:23) and in 2 Cor. 5:8 he says that when he is absent from the body he is at home with the Lord. I take it that the promise in Rev. 14:13 is also the effect that those who die in the Lord are immediately blessed in heaven.

The following verse would suggest as much, for the blessed dead "rest from their labors, and their works follow them." All that is meant by a heavenly rest is for the believer immediately upon death. That their works follow them indicates that their noble deeds in this life will determine their reward in the next. While we are saved only by God's grace, it is evident that good works will determine rewards. Good deeds are all that we can take with us when we die. Gold, silver, pleasures of the flesh, and the honors bestowed by men all have to be left behind. But our good works will follow us, and they will make a difference in heaven.

Another impressive instance of heaven telling an earthling to write down its promises is in Rev. 21:5 where “He who sat upon the throne” at last speaks. Throughout the Apocalypse there are references to the one who sits upon the throne, which is believed to be Christ himself, but he never speaks until this occasion when he tells the apostle to write it down. “Behold, I make all things new.” It is surely one of the most significant lines in all the Bible in that it refers to God’s promise to transform all creation as well as mankind.

That passage goes on to say, “And he said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’” Again we have to conclude that since all that God says is true and faithful, these words are true and faithful in a special way. Since they give expression to a highly significant promise, *Write it down!*

We should revel in the face of such a promise. It is so mind-boggling in its implications that one might reasonably reject it as incredible and simply too good to be true. But that is the mystery of faith. It believes to be true that which is too good to be true. It would be great if there were at least one person in every congregation with that kind of faith, for such a faith would surely be so contagious that it would spread to others. How can our hearts be other than filled with joy when we believe that we are destined to live in a body, a world, a heaven, a universe all made new.

It may be to difficult for us to imagine a world where there is no more sin and no more death. It will be a world, even a universe, that will look as if it had just been created, and with indescribable beauty and glory. They will not actually be new, but will be so transformed (implying very basic changes) as to seem new. The first heaven and the first earth will have passed away, or the new appearance will be so magnificent that it will seem so. That there will be no more sea, which is part of this renewal, is no insignificant point. That the seas cover some three-fourths of the surface of our globe renders it largely unfit for general habitation, and it serves to keep nations and people separated. Such an arrangement may be necessary to the present state of affairs, for the vast oceans certainly have their purpose, especially for the thousands of species of animals that live in the water. But the new order of things will be so different that seas will not be needed, so it will be possible for the new humanity to occupy all the world.

What makes this promise so beautiful that it was given (written!) to a suffering world and a persecuted people, and that may be the condition of our planet until our Lord comes to renew it. All tears will be wiped away, which is to say that there will be no more tragedies, no more heartaches, no more sorrows. Death will be no more. All that can be called “former things” will have ended; all things will then be new.

The believer can exult in such hope without knowing when or how God will bring all this about. However and whenever it is, it is enough to believe that we will have new bodies, new abodes, new work to do amidst new heavens and a new earth. That we ourselves will be made new, while still our personal selves, is reason enough for us to praise him who sits upon the throne. We are to believe that he is not only the only wise God, but that he is able to keep us from falling and to present us blameless before his glorious presence with exceeding joy (Jude 24).

Write it all down! And hide it in your heart! —*the Editor*

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IF UNITED IN HEAVEN...

There are no divisions in the grave, nor in that world which lies beyond it! There our divisions must come to an end! We must all unite there! Would to God that we could find it in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here. —Thomas Campbell in *Declaration and Address*

We've all heard that joke about a new arrival being escorted about heaven. When he sees a group of redeemed ones huddled together in a comer of heaven, he asked his attending angel who they might be. "Quiet," the angel cautions. "They are Church of Christ folk and they think they are the only ones here."

The joke has the advantage of being accommodating, for it can be adapted to other sincere but strait-laced souls beside the Church of Christ, whether Southern Baptists, Missouri Synod Lutherans, or Roman Catholics. But it is really a bad joke, for no one who goes to heaven is going to suppose that he and his are the only ones there. Heaven is a matter of the church on earth at last assembling with the church in heaven and becoming that "great multitude" that serves and praises God throughout eternity.

Yet the joke has an important redeeming quality. We laugh at it because we know that it is going to be different in heaven from the way it is on earth. We will not be divided into sects there. There will be no divisions there. Indeed, we shall be the united assembly of Jesus Christ, preserved for his eternal kingdom. The above quote from Thomas Campbell is appropriate. If we shall be united there, why do we have to be divided here?

Campbell's plea for unity in this quotation is persuasive. He begins at an unlikely place, the grave. That is where altercations, confrontations, and factious disputes all end. A short time before his own death, my friend Carl Ketcherside wrote to me about the passing

of Reuel Lemmons, a fellow editor with whom he had had sharp exchanges through the years. He recalled the disagreements they threshed out in their respective journals and then said, “All that means nothing now.” I have often thought that when poring over the endless and weary controversies that have beset the church through the centuries. While no doubt some good has come from them, we can wonder how much importance the participants would ascribe to those controversies now that they are among the company of “just people made perfect.”

Yes, Campbell says it well. There are no divisions in the grave! Death is the great leveler and equalizer —and can we add unifier? And there is a sense in which the grave is also the minimizer, for in death we will realize that some things were not as important as we made them. And in death we may come to see that other things were far more important than we had supposed, such as the oneness of all God’s people.

Campbell’s point that since we will be united in heaven we must endeavor to be united on earth seems incontrovertible. It prompts me to raise a question that he does not deal with: *On what basis will we be one in heaven?*

It will not be because in heaven we will have attained uniformity. We will not be carbon copies of each other. The few windows we have in Scripture into the nature of heaven indicate that we will still be our personal, individual selves and different from each other. One such scene in Rev. 7:9f describes the great multitude as made up of those from “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.” While there will be a heavenly language (1 Cor. 13:1) that we will have in common, we will still be who we were on earth in terms of language, culture, and personal identity. So in our heavenly unity we will be different. Heaven would have little meaning if this were not the case.

Nor will we be united in heaven because we will all be perfect, fully mature, and so knowledgeable that we have no more to learn. We will not be gods, in spite of Mormon claims. We will still be human beings, and imperfect ones at that, still growing and still learning. It is true that Heb. 12:23 refers to “the spirits of just people made perfect” in heaven, but this cannot be interpreted in absolute terms. As 1 Cor. 13:12 promises, we now see through a mirror dimly while in heaven we will see “face to face,” but the contrast here is between earthly and heavenly knowledge.. Once in heaven we start from a new perspective, and while we are far in advance of where we were on earth, we continue to grow, to learn, and to grow closer and closer to God.

It follows, therefore, that we will be at different stages in our growth, just as we are on earth. There is a fallacy in supposing that death changes things all that much. We will still be different from each other, and I suspect we will still be working on our imperfections.

We will share different levels of glory. If our good works follow us into heaven (the only thing we can take with us!), as Rev. 14:13 indicates, then we are going to be different upon arrival.

What then makes us one in heaven? It can only be the same thing that makes us one on earth —a common relationship to Jesus Christ and a mutual fellowship with God. All the heavenly scenes in Scripture are focused upon Christ or upon God who sits upon the throne. One scene pictures John weeping profusely because there is no one to open the seals of the scroll that will reveal the future, at which point an elder points him to the Lamb who is Christ, who is able to open the book (chapter 5). The same scene describes multitudes worshiping Christ:

> *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain*
> *To receive power and riches and wisdom.*
>
> *And strength and honor and glory and blessing!*

In another scene the multitudes are praising both God and Christ with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to our God.”

This is what unity is all about whether in heaven or on earth, fellowship with each other by means of fellowship with God and Christ. That is what 1 John 1:3 means when it says, ‘That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you may also have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

The question of unity is therefore not all that complicated. We are in fellowship with each other when we share the common life in Christ. We are united as one when together we are in fellowship with God the Father. That is the only unity there ever was and the only kind there ever will be, whether in heaven or on earth, whether for now or for eternity.

The only real difference in all this is an alarming truth. Those who will be one in heaven are those who have been one on earth, though it is a unity we may not always be conscience of, partly because we are separated by circumstances, continents, and even centuries. The others simply will not be there. —*the Editor*

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Heroes and Reformers of History … No.7

AUGUSTINE: "LOVE GOD AND DO WHAT YOU PLEASE"

There was one quotation from Augustine that always caught the attention of my students in ethics courses in high school and college: *Love God and do what you please.* And it is certain to rile a class at church.

But one taking Augustine's side always wins out, for the old fourth century theologian only needed to point out that if one really loves God his heart will be set upon what pleases God. That makes for good Christian ethics, to be pleased to do what pleases God.

The quotation, however, does more than to provoke ethical questions. It captures the essence of the theology of the church's most influential thinker between Paul in the first century and St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth. Born in 354, Augustine's thought dominated the medieval church, and his influence upon Christian theology through the centuries, including our own time, has been substantial. And that theology is captured in that one magnificent phrase, *the love of God.*

His emphasis on the love of God points to another of his famous lines: "You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you." Much of his life was a search for certainty. He had a passion to know God with certainty, and he agonized over his doubts. Certainty finally came, but in an unexpected way. Even though he was recognized as a philosopher, it was not through philosophy that he found his answer. It was not even through theological system building, though he could do that too. His answer came in a simple prayer to God, "Help me to believe so that I can understand." In our intellectual western world we have come up with the reverse of that, supposing that we have to understand in order to believe.

Like Paul before him, Augustine was smitten with the reality of sin in his life. His "sense of sin" is at the heart of his theology, and to him the essence of sin was self-will, pride, and carnality. He wrote about a person's utter helplessness before God and his diseased will. These were the ideas that led to his own conversion, which is one of the most dramatic in the history of the church.

He was 32 at the time, and he described himself in his *Confessions* as "a miserable young man" who was "sick and tormented" over the sins of his youth, which he dared to name, including lying and deceiving his teachers. He told of how he would steal his neighbor's pears, not to eat out of any need but to cast to the swine. Such stealing was all

the more delightful to him because it was forbidden. This passion to rebel against authority revealed to him the nature of sin. He also saw himself as intellectually arrogant in his youth for supposing that he could fathom the mysteries of the universe.

While in this state of anxiety and distress over his "ugly sins," weeping all the while with the most bitter sorrow, he heard the voice of a child repeatedly saying, "Take it and read, take it and read." It was as if it were children at play, but he could remember no child's game of that nature. He decided it was the voice of God, telling him to open up the Scriptures and take heed to the first passage his eyes fell upon. This he did and his eyes fell upon Rom. 13:13-14, which, translated from his Latin text, reads:

> *No orgies or drunkenness. no immortality or indecency. no fighting or jealousy. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ; and stop giving attention to your sinful nature. to satisfy its desires.*

While at this time he had long been a believer, he did not find peace until in his heart he "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and renounced sin in his life. It was not until then that he was baptized. From that moment on he no longer had any doubts. He soon rose in clerical ranks to be appointed bishop of Hippo in northern Africa, a post he held for 44 years. It was during his long years as a bishop that he formed his theology, centered both in the love of God and what he called "infinite grace." One of his achievements was to fuse together Greek philosophy and Christian thought. He did this by making God dominate rather than Jesus. While always faithful to the deity of Christ, he worshiped Christ by glorifying God, and it is God who was the object of his search and of his praise. In this respect he was like the apostle Paul who was so God-centered in his teaching that even when he praised Christ if was in reference to God, such as "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15) and "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

It is here that the church owes a great debt to Augustine —his obsession with the glory and majesty of God, his sovereignty, his role as creator, and his unfathomable love. We would all do well to read his *Confessions.* which is readily available in most any public library, and be exposed to such as, "Thou hast stricken my heart with Thy word, and I loved Thee. And also the heaven and earth, and all that is therein, behold, on every side, they say that I should love Thee."

Above all else, however, was Augustine's ceaseless search for a deeper and deeper fellowship with God. He was overwhelmed with the idea that the great God of heaven, the creator of all things, could come into him. He would cry out to God, "Is there anything in me that can contain Thee?" If the heavens and the earth, which God had made, could not contain him, how could man?, he would ask in his insatiable search.

Few have praised God as did Augustine in such lines as these: "always working, yet never at rest; gathering, yet needing nothing; sustaining, pervading, and protecting; creating, nourishing, and developing; seeking and yet possessing all things." Too few of us are so close to God to look to him as "my life, my holy joy" as did Augustine.

How tragic it is that so many in the modem church appear to give little thought of God, and the idea of searching for him, to follow him more nearly and to love him more dearly, seems never to concern them. The church has been influenced by the pagan world around it in that it lives as if there is no God. We all know that one can be "a good church member" without giving any serious thought to what it means to follow God.

It was out of his passion to know God that Augustine dealt with many weighty issues that have long disturbed believers, such as the problem of evil. Augustine decided that evil has no substantial reality, but is only the absence of good. Evil is always within God's control. He does not bring evil upon man (Man brings it upon himself, usually!) but he can and does use evil for man's betterment and his own glory. The will of God, which is always good, is sometimes realized through the evil will of man. In permitting evil God is in some way reflecting his own goodness.

He set forth his practical theology, a kind of "How to live" treatise, in his *The City of God.* Life is like two cities dwelling side by side and even intermingled. One is the City of God and the other the City of Man. People are free to choose which city they will live in. Those who choose to follow carnality and accumulate material things are citizens of the City of Man; those who choose spiritual values are citizens in the City of God. These cities coexist, perhaps peacefully, and it is not always evident who lives in which city. But God knows, and in time it will be evident. This is Augustine's way of teaching that while we are "in the world," and perhaps greatly involved in its ongoing affairs, we are not "of the world."

As intellectual as he was, Augustine insisted that it is a serious error to reI y upon reason alone in search of answers. Reason must be sanctified and aided by the Spirit of God, and the Christian must live by faith. He saw faith, hope, and love as the true virtues

of the Christian, which stood as opposites to the rationalistic virtues of the Greeks, such as prudence, temperance, and fortitude, which Augustine saw as prideful vices. The mark of true religion to Augustine was the prevalence of the true virtues.

Augustine has a special word for those who have to suffer apparent injustices and for no fault of their own. The old bishop observed that there is no way to look at a person's life and determine whether he is blessed or not. In this "mingled web of human affairs" God's judgment is present even if it cannot be discerned. We must accept without complaint that good people may suffer earthly misfortunes while the wicked enjoy life. There is another world in which the scales will be balanced. The righteous will be blessed and the wicked will be punished.

Among Augustine's contribution for our day is his capacity to cause people to think, a mark of all great teachers. People seldom responded to him neutrally. Either they vigorously opposed him or enthusiastically supported him. Some would say he was neurotic about sin and guilt, but in our day when it is sometimes asked, "Whatever happened to sin?," we need to hear him. Ifwe can't explain world wars, death camps, AIDS, Hiroshima, and all the other gross evils that devastate us, Augustine can. The human race is depraved. It is amazing that while he is seen as a "Catholic" father, it was to him that the Protestant reformers turned when they rebelled against Catholicism. That is because he understood grace. And because of his influence upon Calvin the Western world is left with the view that "It can't be good if it doesn't hurt," which has just enough truth to it to be of value.

Any old hero of the church who formed his thinking around the belief that God made us for himself, and that "Our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" should be alive and well in our day. —*the Editor*

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DO WE EXALT THE CHURCH ABOVE CHRIST?
(Or Is It Our Sect?)

I recently visited a Church of Christ sister in the hospital and there was something about our conversation that disturbed me. Since she was making a good recovery from her illness she was free to talk, and I encouraged her to tell me about her life. It turned out that she has been a tireless worker, along with her late husband, in helping to start new

congregations, especially in the northern states which have long been considered Church of Christ mission fields. I came to admire her for her sacrifices for the Lord and for her work's sake. She is obviously a good and intelligent woman.

In telling me about her husband she said, "He didn't know the church when I first met him." Later in the conversation when she was explaining the conversion of her husband she said, "He had never heard of the Church of Christ when we met," and she went on to explain how she brought him to a knowledge of the truth. That was easy enough for me to believe, for I found her a persuasive woman.

As we talked on about her spiritual pilgrimage I was disturbed by the fact that so little had been said about Jesus Christ. Her life had been given over to the work of the church. She had tirelessly labored in building up the church, sometimes from the ground up, and in difficult places. She had succeeded in converting her husband to the church. All this is of course the Church of Christ. I noticed such language as, "He came to know the church," and "We were always faithful to the church."

While it was hardly the time to challenge the dear woman, I wondered where Christ was in all this. While I am confident she would say, if! had questioned her, that Jesus Christ is the basis of it all, I was smitten by her church-oriented thinking. I found myself blaming our System rather than her. "My God," I said to myself as I left her hospital room, "what have we done to our people?"

Chances arc if I had been talking to a Baptist, a Pentecostal, or even a devout Methodist, the words would have been different, such as, "I was at last able to lead my husband to the Lord," or "When we first met he did not know Jesus."

Church of Christ folk are more like the Mormons. All they can talk about is "the true church" or "the restored church," and everything is measured by one's relationship to the Mormon church. I hate to say it, but we are not much better. We just have a different view of which sect is the true church!

While our Church of Christ sister did not elaborate, it could have been that her husband-to-be did indeed know the Lord when they first met, but that would not have mattered. It was her task to convert him to the right church.

The fallacy in all this is that we, like the Mormons, equate what we call ‘The Church of Christ” with the Body of Christ revealed in Scripture. We can with the apostles refer to “Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32) in exalted terms, but we are being sectarian when we make our own religious group (a euphemism for denomination!) the whole of that church. We are perpetuating partyism when we suppose that the Body of Christ in Denton, Texas is restricted to those that we call “The Church of Christ.” Christ’s church in any city is made up of all those who faithfully follow Jesus Christ. The true church is where the Spirit of Christ is.

We can reasonably insist that the true church of Jesus Christ is not anyone of the denominations nor all of them combined. It is rather made up of all those who are “in Christ” wherever they may be. If there are true Christians among the Baptists and Presbyterians, and surely there must be, it is because they have believed and been baptized into Christ, not because they are Baptists or Presbyterians. So with those in the Church of Christ. Church of Christ ism does not make Christians - only following Jesus Christ does that. So, when we say there are “Christians in the sects,” as our people have conceded since the days of Campbell and Stone, we mean that they are “in Christ” in spite of being in a sect, whether Church of Christ, Presbyterian, or Baptist. And *they* are the true church wherever they are.

Our leaders in the Stone-Campbell Movement have also always insisted that there should be no denominations. Their existence stands as an obstruction to the church of Christ uniting. Churches should cease being denominations, which of course includes the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and then there will be only the Body of Christ. Thank God, that will one day be realized.

Paul tells us who the true Christians are in 2 Tim. 2:19. “The firm foundation of God stands,” he says as he encourages young Timothy amidst perilous times, and he is talking about the church. He goes on to say that it is marked with God’s seal, which identifies it as his own. The seal is, “The Lord knows those that are his, and let everyone who has named the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” It is clear enough: The true church, the firm foundation of God, is made up of those whom the. Lord knows to be his own.

The true Christians are those whom the Lord claims to be his own, souls who have turned from sin and are living Godly lives. The Lord knows each one by name. We don’t. He knows who his true church is. We don’t. But we can have a good idea. When we see people who believe and act as if they know Jesus and are known by him, and who are living accordingly, we can accept them as equals in Christ and as members of the Body of

Christ. But still we never really know for sure, for the true church has God's seal stamped upon it, and that seal says it is God that knows those that are his. Nobody else can make that judgment, not even editors! —*the Editor*

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OUR YOUNG WOMEN WILL LEAVE UNLESS …

Jeanenne Nichols

As we look further into the place of women in the church it is of some significance that when the news of the resurrection of our Lord was first proclaimed, it was believed only by women, not by men. And women were the first to proclaim the message to others. When the two Marys and Joanna, along with other women, went to the tom b and found it empty and were told by two angels that Jesus was risen, they hurried away to tell his disciples, "but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (Lk. 24:11).

The resurrection appearances make it clear that the women readily believed while the men doubted. Two male disciples on the road to Emmaus reported that "some women of our company amazed us" with news of the empty tomb. Were they amazed because God revealed himself to women? They went on to say that the men checked out the story for themselves and "found it just as the women had said." But the resurrected Lord, to whom they were saying all this, did not praise them for checking out the women's story, but rather said, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe" (Lk. 24:25). The women by contrast remembered his words and believed (Lk. 24:8). They were not surprised that Jesus' words were fulfilled, but believed and reported what they heard and saw.

I do not believe that males who are committed followers of our Lord see themselves as superior to females. The men who wrote the gospel narratives told the truth about men. Matthew was willing to tell that it was a man who betrayed Christ, that it was men who deserted him, and that it was women who remained faithful to the end. It was male writers that tell how the women sat by the tomb, listened to the angels, touched the risen Savior, and ran to tell the eleven men who were in hiding!

In all my study of God's plan for me, a female believer in the Lord and Savior of all mankind, the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 is what convicted me of what his will is for me and all males. The message is this: Don't be distracted by what men and the

world would consider your job as a woman —housework, cooking, having babies. One thing only is needed of male or female, sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to his teaching.

In the next chapter, Lk. 11:27 -28, Jesus affirms this message to me. A woman cried out, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!,” which was woman’s concept of herself in that culture. But Jesus said no —“blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” Jesus seems to be saying that one is not any more blessed if she is female and can bear children than if she were male and cannot. The blessing is in hearing and obeying.

I thank God that I was born into a family with a father who taught me I was created in the image of God and treated me with respect. He never made my mother, my sisters, or me feel that we were less “children and joint heirs” than he and other males. I thank God for a husband of 25 years who has affirmed my worth as a human being created in the image of God. Our marriage is the united bond of friendship and love that it is because my husband has no need or desire to “rule” over me. We are children of the King, seeking His will for our lives together, equally but uniquely as God planned.

My pain and frustration as a female in the church extends beyond wanting only my own gifts to be shared. I am just as concerned about anyone, male or female, who sits in the assembly of believers with gifts lying dormant. Our Lord teaches, “To whom much is given, much is required” (Lk. 12:48). When gifts are given us, much is required of us, male or female.

The Church of Christ is part of me. My grandfather was a preacher and my father was an elder in this denomination. My grandmother led singing in Churches of Christ in Iowa and California. My mother taught me what hospitality really means, and to believe that I am worthy in the eyes of Jesus as a female. But I must “Listen to Him” of whom God spoke at the Transfiguration, and so must all God’s female children. The Church of Christ is not listening to Jesus concerning women, and I and especially my daughters, along with other truth-seeking young women among us will not be with our denomination for long if we are not recognized as joint heirs in the Kingdom.

I beg us all to search the Scriptures for the will of the one we follow, Jesus the Christ. Ask yourself how Jesus treated women. Whether we follow his teaching and example is not an option. It is our calling, for our life is a quest for a knowledge of His will for us.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master; it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master" (Mt. 10:24). —*1310 Summoner Lane, Abilene, TX 79602*

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IS IMMERSION PROVED BY EXAMPLE?

Cecil Hook

In my youth I learned how simply the baptism of the Ethiopian nobleman served as a pattern to prove immersion. As I used that example through the years, I thought that anyone who rejected the impact of that precedent just did not respect Bible authority. I learned our hermeneutic of "the authority of approved example" before I ever knew what a hermeneutic was.

Now that I border on senility, I ask: Is immersion proved by the example of the baptism of the eunuch? The answer: No!

As a youth I picked up and used extensively the old sermon about baptism that it required water, much water, going to the water, going down into the water, and coming up out of the water. I could illustrate that beautifully by the account of the baptism of the eunuch.

Now, let's look at Philip and the eunuch: "… they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water …" (Acts 8:38f). After they went down into the water, Philip baptized the eunuch. Then they came up out of the water. The baptizing took place after they went into the water and before they came out of it. The going in and coming out were not a part of the baptism. Whatever baptism is, it was performed between the going into and coming out of the water. Besides, Philip went into and came out of the water, and he was neither baptized nor partially baptized.

We go to that passage with a mental picture of immersion to substantiate. If we did not know what baptism was already, what would the example prove? Suppose, for instance, that baptism meant to *wash his wounds.* Would it still be an example of immersion as he washed his wounds?

I am not trying to convince you that pouring or sprinkling water is a proper mode of baptism. I do not understand why anyone would practice anything except immersion. But I am questioning our hermeneutic of trying to bind historical details as patterns.

Immersion is authorized by the word *baptizo* which means to immerse, not by some supposed example. Surely, the eunuch was immersed, but the "example" does not prove it!

Well, at least we have baptism described as a burial in Romans 6:3-4, don't we? Not really! That text reads: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death. ." That passage does not describe the action of baptism. In baptism one is buried with Christ - not Jesus buried with us in water. Whatever baptism is, in it we are symbolically buried with Jesus in his tomb nineteen centuries ago. Because we know the meaning of *baptizo*, we know Paul speaks of immersion, but it is not described in the language of this reference.

Now, let's look at another example of baptism. In describing the falling of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on Pentecost, three times that baptism is referred to as a pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-19,33). In fact, it was "distributed and resting on each one of them" (2:3). Its falling in such a dispersed manner looks more like sprinkling (aspersion) than immersion! In other references, the falling, pouring out, and receiving of the Holy Spirit are all related to the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15f; Titus 3:5f). The giving of the Spirit which enabled disciples to know the truth was called an anointing rather than a burial (1 John 2:20, 26; John 14:26).

Following our hermeneutic of approved example, are we not authorized to define baptism as pouring, aspersion, or anointing? We have tried to evade this point by explaining that the baptism of the Spirit was an overwhelming or submerging of the person by the Holy Spirit. But the Scriptures still say that the Spirit was poured out and fell on them in a distributed manner. Having made this point, I will not pursue any study of the meaning of these words further here.

Again, I have no desire to convince you that immersion should be abandoned, but I am saying that our "approved example" hermeneutic is ineffective.

In the first instance we try to make an example where there is none and in the second we try to explain away the impact of an example. And this is only one of our many inconsistencies in trying to follow precedent as binding authority. A historical account may

reveal an acceptable method for doing a thing but it does not necessarily indicate the only acceptable method.

As I so often sought to bind immersion by the force of example of the Ethiopian's baptism, I wondered why the whole world could not see it as I did. Now I am beginning to see why many of my listeners could detect the inadequacy of my premise. *-1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Tx. 78130*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

In July I attended the Preachers' Meeting in Dallas that was called to discuss once more the issues that have divided "conservatives" and "liberals" in Churches of Christ, primarily institutionalism. The dispute began more than a generation ago over Herald of Truth, a TV-radio outreach, which was conducted by a single "sponsoring church" in Abilene but supported by hundreds of congregations. The disputed "issues" came to include such institutions as orphanages and colleges (Can these be supported from the church treasury?) and today includes such innovations as a church having a gymnasium, athletic teams, suppers, etc. Since most all these brethren on both sides were "right wing" (not the Abilene and Pepperdine variety!) they all seemed to agree that a gymnasium was a symbol of apostasy, and there I was probably the only one present from a Church of Christ that has a gymnasium! Except we call it our Family Activities Center. We recently used it for a prayer rally in sending one of our own families as missionaries to Africa, but we also use it to eat together and the kids play there. Someone raised the question: If a gym is wrong how about a vestibule, and how big can the vestibule be? It may sound like nitpicking but these brethren are sincerely concerned with what is and what is not the work of the church. Is the church to preach the gospel or play ping pong? I was accepted warmly by many old friends, some of whom I have known for 40 and 50 years. When I got home I told Ouida that I was amazed how old they all looked! Some new brethren seemed pleased to meet the old editor that they had heard so much about, mostly bad of course. I was treated with civility (Incivility sometimes pervades such gatherings). A good spirit prevailed in the discussions, but there is no possibility at all that these two sides will ever be "united" if that means they have to see all the questions alike. One leading "noninstitutional"brother said to me, "These issues mean nothing to you, do they?" I told him that the issues being discussed were not very important to me, but the

ones discussing them were, that I was there to see and be with my brethren on both sides and try to understand better how they are thinking. I disagreed with both sides while loving and accepting them all. But they tell me I can't do that, that I have to line up and see it their way. When I asked, in a written question to a panel, if two congregations in a given city, one choosing to support Herald of Truth and the other choosing not to, could not love and accept each other and do things together that they did agree on, the answer was no. That is the fallacy that has plagued us with divisions all these years. We have to agree on all these things to be in fellowship! We can't be united unless we see all "the issues" alike, and each sect among us has its own list of issues. True unity in Christ has never been of that nature, from the time of Peter and Paul to our own day. Such unity would not be unity at all, but an imposed and blind conformity. And it would be as undesirable, unfruitful, and boring as it is impossible.

Ouida was confined to home all summer in order to care for her mother whose condition continues to deteriorate. Since it now takes two to care for her, I am at home more than usual. When I am away Ouida has to call in help. But we did import some help and flew to San Antonio together in June where I performed the wedding ceremony of a dear old friend and his new bride, Ralph and Mildred Hancock. Mildred is a great gal and we welcomed her to the old gang unconditionally. She had been a widow for a long time. I helped Ralph bury his first wife of many years, also a beloved friend, sometime back. It is great that Ralph and Mildred found each other for their sunset years together, which we all know are the very best years. Ouida, by the way, had another (admitted) birthday during the summer, which I understand is the last (admitted) birthday she plans to have. No matter, she continues to be more precious to me every year, and I marvel at her patience in caring for her mother.

With grandson Ashley I made a hurried trip to Calico Rock, Arkansas in the Ozarks, an annual affair for us, to visit with old friends Dr. and Mrs. Robert Lane. I've watched their four children grow up, all of whom were at home when we were there, and all of whom are either in college or medical school this fall, which may be some kind of a record and enough to challenge any family financially. While there I spoke as usual at the Church of Christ. There is one dear old sister in that church, who is a delight to be around, that has lived in the same house for over 80 years, and in that little mountain village she dated boys in a buggy. I tried to impress upon Ashley that it is very rare to meet somebody that had dates in horse and buggy, and what it must have been like to go to singings and taffy-pullings in such a vehicle. But I am not sure I got through to him. Ours is such a different world!

With Ashley in tow I went from Arkansas to Joplin, Mo. where I made seven video recordings on the pastoral epistles at the Good News Productions, a series that Carl Ketcherside began but had not finished at the time of his death. The Good News folk are a super organization and are impressively equipped. I told them I was impressed by both their facility and their felicity. As I concluded the series I told my potential viewers that it was a delight to work with Carl Ketcherside once more, that we had done many things together for almost 40 years, and that we both rejoiced that our unity efforts were now being carried on by others. And then I told Carl that I was pleased to finish what he had begun, and as for his part it was a jolly good job. The camera girls may have been surprised that I would talk like that to someone who had passed on, so I explained to them afterward that we continue to be in fellowship with those who have gone on to be with the Lord, and that it is OK to talk to them if we are a mind to. It is all right for us to talk to them, and who knows but what they can hear us, but it is not all right for us to try to get them to talk to us, I told them.

After giving the Commencement address at Minnesota Bible College in May, I spoke at New Brighton (Ws.) Christian Church where Dale Erickson is the minister. In the afternoon I called on some dear old souls at a nursing home as I nearly always do on Sunday afternoon wherever I am. Then to Christian Harbor Youth Camp near Ladysmith, Ws. where I joined a number of preachers in worshiping around an open fireplace (I had to borrow a heavy sweater). I led them in a series on our heritage. In late August I will be in a retreat in the mountains of northern Georgia with the Brookvalley Church of Christ in Atlanta, this time on great moments in Scripture. I will fly to Nashville, rent a car, visit friends at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society and in Chattanooga, and drive through the mountains to my destination.

I try to keep up with how women are faring in the ministry in other churches (They are not doing so well among the Campbellites!). Receiving alumni mail outs from Princeton Seminary provides tidbits on what is going on with women among the Presbyterians. A recent article told of a number of man and wife co-pastor arrangements. One woman co-pastor explained that her husband does nearly all the weddings, for it just doesn’t seem right to most people to be married by a woman! The same Princeton bulletin had an article on how the military chaplaincy is changing. There were no women chaplains until the mid 70’s, but it is now almost common, and the women chaplains say they are freer in the military than in civilian churches where it is almost impossible to become a senior minister. One woman chaplain says she has been fully accepted, with “positive curiosity.” Another Princeton graduate reports that after seven years as a Navy chaplain she has had no gender problem at all. I think I have never put this into the record before, but when I was quite young, just out of college, I applied to serve as a chaplain in the Navy early in

World War II. They indicated they might call me, but they never did. I may have been too young or not well enough educated, or it may have been, as some thought, that I already had five older brothers who were in the military, two of them already in combat, all of whom came home. When I told Ouida about the women chaplains and reminded her how close I came to being a chaplain during the war, she said it is was just as well that I spent the war years in graduate school, that the Lord knew what he was doing, for if I had gone I might have been the one in the family not to have come back. And look what she would have missed!

More openness toward those in other churches continues to grow among Churches of Christ. Recent instances: Pepperdine University conferred a doctoral degree on Charles Swindol, pastor of First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, Ca. and author of 28 books, who was their Commencement speaker; the Burke Road Church of Christ in Houston recently visited their neighbors, the Asbury United Methodist Church in a joint service in which their minister, John Wright, spoke, and their chorus sang.

A woman in Iowa wrote to *The Disciple* that she was a Disciple by choice, not by birth, but that she was grieved over our divisions and hairsplitting. She says we need to get on with our job of preaching the gospel.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

In a *time* when there is still “I” dotting and “T” crossing your publication is much appreciated. It is refreshing to know there are those who can see the whole picture. A new generation of Biblical thinkers seems to be surfacing among us. —*Dean Williams, Andrews, NC*

Even those over the years who have disagreed with you, sometimes rather violently, owe you and your publication more than they may realize. You’ve challenged our movement’s complacency and forced us to think, and that’s always a plus. Would that we would learn that the way to be true to the spirit of our forefathers and, much more importantly, to the Spirit of God, is not to etch everything they said in stone and never have an original thought. The way to be true to what they began is to keep on honestly searching for truth wherever it may lead. —*Curtis Shelburne, editor, Christian Appeal*

I was amused to read that Ouida has "now arrived," having been "written up" along with you. To Janet and me she arrived a long time ago, for we have always seen her as one of the finest, most graceful Christian women we have ever known. She has always been the finest complement of your own work. We love her. *—Bob and Janet Yarbrough, Bedford, TX*

Responses to "Boston Church" Report

As to your reference to the Princeton Church of Christ being part of the Boston church, the Princeton church withdrew from the Boston church 18 months ago. We worshiped with the Princeton church for five years and are intimately aware of the excesses and legalism that permeates the Boston work. It almost destroyed the Princeton church. Indeed, we should learn from their evangelistic commitment and their enthusiasm, but we should not be deceived by their error and the harm they are doing to many people in the Body of Christ. They are still our brothers in Christ and need our earnest prayers. *—Mrs. Samuel S. Dunn, Beaumont, TX*

As always, you've written with clarity and tender kindness. My problem with the Boston church is theology. Acceptance by God and relationship with God is based solely on performance. The Cross is relegated (hidden) to the center of a uniform forest. The movement is sexist to the core. Women are hardest hit. After all, women don't "work." Women must not only bow to their husbands, but their disciplers and their husband's disciplers. Children are abused emotionally. I've been battling works-righteousness for 20 years. They are legalistic on baptism, "commitment," and have an incredible preoccupation with sin. I'll stand against the Galatian heresy. I love you, brother. *—Larry James, minister, Richardson East Church of Christ, Dallas, TX*

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BOOK NOTES

I am presently reading an interesting and informative analysis of the fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention entitled *God's Last and Only Hope*. Since it deals with the nature and cause of division among Christians we can all see ourselves in this study. He says it is tough being a Southern Baptist today because of the South's changing culture,

and he explains how the SBC has been on the verge of division for a long time. A revealing study of cur largest Protestant denomination that once saw itself as God's last and only hope for the conversion of the world. $13.95 postpaid.

If you have always believed the traditional interpretation of an unending hell, you will be challenged by Edward Fudge's *The Fire That Consumes* which we can send to you for $21.00 postpaid. Whether you agree with all its conclusion, you will find the book persuasively biblical and resourceful.

We will send you 15 back issues of this journal, selected at random by us for only $4.00, or 25 copies for $6.00, while they last. This is especially for newer readers who would like to know what we have been saying through the years. Some of the issues will be from the 1960's and 1970's. They are all in good shape, like new.

Our last bound volume, which is for 1987-88, has the title *The Sense of Scripture: Studies In Interpretation,* is available for $12.50. Once you see how handsomely bound it is and how easy to read, you might want to add other volumes we have dating back to 1977.

We continue to get positive responses to Leroy Garrett's *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches.* You can receive this book from us in two ways: buy it outright at $21.95 postpaid, which is inexpensive these days for a book of over 700 pages; or we will send you one as a free bonus when you sent us six subs to this paper at $4.00 each (the club rate) for a total of $24.00. This may include renewals, including your own.

Subscription Rates: $6.00 per year or two years for $10.00. In clubs of three or more (sent to separate addresses by us) $4.00 per name per year. Foreign: $8.00 yr.

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